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The Crucifiers

by

Lyman Abbott

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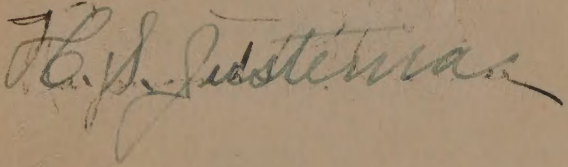

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THE CRUCIFIERS

BY

LYMAN ABBOTT

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Foreword

THE following chapters are of interest, not merely because of their inherent worth as studies of the forces which sent Jesus to death centuries ago, and which still crucify his spirit, but also as the last contributions of the most widely influential teacher of religion in this country. Judged by the number of persons whom he reached through his voice and pen, and by the extent to which he shaped their thinking, Lyman Abbott was unquestionably the foremost doctor of the Church in America in his time, and one of the half-dozen most potent teachers of Christianity in our national history. It was not that he professed to be an original scholar adding discoveries of his own to the knowledge of his generation; but that, with singularly open

mind and the power of entire assimilation, he met each movement of thought, through a long life-time filled with momentous changes in opinion, and used each to make more plain and persuasive the message of Christ.

Dr. Abbott possessed the inquiring spirit which examines fearlessly, and the logical mind which reasons calmly, conjoined with the reverent and passionate soul which adores devoutly and consecrates itself with enthusiasm. He has told us often that from his earliest days, God and immortality were luminously self-evident truths for him. His mind was like a roomy house, where certain beliefs were the permanent dwellers, and where the door was always thrown wide in hospitality to all current ideas. The home circle was not very numerous: Dr. Abbott lived by a few great convictions, but he en-

tertained countless mental guests, and made welcome in his household of faith many whom his contemporaries regarded as wholly uncongenial with Christian faith. In that inclusive mind they were soon made to appear the fast friends and helpful partners of the believing household.

He carefully trained himself in a simple and picturesque style, so as to be understood by all sorts and conditions. His thought was always sufficiently fresh and rich to hold the attention and satisfy the intelligence of college faculties and students; and at the same time he expressed himself in such plain and homely fashion that he was a favorite preacher to groups of foreign-born industrial workers. Like his Master, the common people heard him gladly. Few ministers of religion have appealed so successfully to so

many different groups in the community. Intellectuals were caught by his modernity, commercial folk by his practicality, the aesthetic by his sympathy with their devotion to beauty, plain folk by his simple interpretation of the elemental feelings, the saintly by the maturity of his spirit, and inhabitants of the outer court by the breadth of his human sympathy.

As one reads these quiet meditations of an octogenarian disciple, one recalls with amusement how even within relatively recent years Dr. Abbott was viewed with suspicion by many fellow-Christians as a radical subverter of the historic faith. It has always been the lot of the Church's leading teachers to be accused of heresy. In reality he was one of the most valuable constructive factors of his day, making Christianity credible and co-

gent to thousands who might else have been lost to the Church. While others were conserving forms of thought, he conserved the religious life, and a vast number of men and women to Christian discipleship. All his long life he sat humbly in the school-room of Christ, studying his words and life and studying all other things in his light, worshiping Him as the image of the invisible God, and devoting his every talent to his service. In his many-sided career, as an editor, a public speaker, and a preacher, he dealt with a large variety of topics, and his vital and vigorous mind went out to a thousand interests; but he never treated any theme without relating it to the mind of Christ, and along every line of his manifold activity he was always an evangelist, seeking to make the

spirit of Jesus dominate the thought and life of men.

It was this purpose which bound the days of his more than five and eighty years "each to each in natural piety." One is touched in these chapters to hear this venerable prophet turning back with affectionate honor to the words of his own father. He who inspired his childhood with Christian faith still lives on in spirit in his extreme age to bless him. And this evidence of deep family affection suggests a primary secret of Dr. Abbott's power. Along with his acute and disciplined intelligence, those who heard or read him felt the man's heart. His tribute to his wife is an exquisite piece of writing, but no more beautiful than the home life of which it was the fruit. He had a rare capacity for friendship, which enabled him to overleap barriers

of years and make himself the comrade not only of his own children and children's children, but of many young men and women. Scores who will read these pages will recall interviews which they sought with him in which he made them feel themselves companions in thought and effort whom he was delighted to know. As the decades rolled past, and he survived his contemporaries and with unflagging mental and physical power became the associate of their sons and daughters, and often of their grandchildren, he was not only one of the most universally honored citizens of the Republic and leaders of the Church, but one of the most generally loved figures in our land.

He spoke so naturally and trustfully of death, and wrote so confidently and convincingly of the Other Room, that to readers of these final messages, pub-

lished after his departure, these will not seem the words of one whose life is over, but of one who is going on most congenially in the life of that city of which the Lamb slain, whom he here portrays for us, is the everlasting light.

Henry Sloane Coffin

THE CRUCIFIERS

The Institutions of Irreligion

ABOUT the year of my birth my father, Jacob Abbott, wrote in "The Corner Stone" a description of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, from which I extract the following paragraph:

"We must look at the *characters* of the actors, rather than their deeds; for in character we may be similar to them, though from the entirely different circumstances in which we are placed we have not, and we never can have the opportunity to commit the crimes they perpetrated. I shall endeavor, therefore, as I go on to the examination of the story, to bring to view, as clearly as possible, the characters of those concerned in it; with particular reference, too, to the aspects which similar characters would

assume at the present day. If I am not very greatly deceived, Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot, and even the Roman soldiers, have far more imitators and followers than is generally supposed, and that, too, within the very pale of the Christian Church."

In the spirit of this paragraph, I propose to present sketches of five typical characters engaged in the crucifixion:

The Worldly-Minded Church Member.

The Ambitious Ecclesiastic.

The Cowardly Politician.

The Callous Profiteers.

The First Pagan Convert.

But if we are to understand these characters we must understand those elements in the community of hostility to Jesus which by their action they represented and which gave them their power.

The history of Israel begins with the Exodus; what precedes in the Bible is the record of prehistoric traditions. The foundation, political and religious, of Israel is found in the Ten Commandments. That religion was very simple: reverence for God, respect for parents, preservation of a certain time from drudgery for the cultivation of the spirit, and regard for the four fundamental rights of man—to his person, his property, his family, and his reputation. Nothing was said of temple or priesthood or sacrifice, or ceremonial obligations of any description. These were all additions of a later date.

These additions respecting temple, priesthood, and sacrifice Jesus disregarded. He returned to the simple religion of the Ten Commandments. He attended the Temple because its outer court was a convenient forum

where He could teach the people. He attended the synagogue because in his earlier ministry its pulpits were open to Him. But He never offered a sacrifice and never recommended sacrifices to his disciples; He openly proclaimed the forgiveness of God on no other condition than repentance and the resolve to enter on a new life; He specifically taught that God could be worshiped as well without the Temple as within, and foretold the destruction of the Temple at no distant day.

He did not attack the priesthood. But the priest is officially a mediator between God and man, and Christ's teaching left no place for such a mediator. He taught that God is a Father to whom his children may come freely at any time and in any place—the pagans as well as the Jews, sinners as well as saints. Whoever seeks finds;

whoever knocks, to him the door is opened. It is opened to the humble and penitent publican; it is closed to the self-satisfied Pharisee. Christ never referred to public worship in either Temple or synagogue. But He laid great emphasis, both by precept and example, on the privilege and the duty of private prayer.

And He paid no attention to the code of ceremonial obligation which Jewish puritanism had added to the five simple ethical laws of the Ten Commandments. Neither He nor his disciples observed the fasts appointed by the elders. The elaborate code which prescribed what the people might and what they might not do on the Sabbath He disregarded. The complex system of washings which the elders had established He cast aside as without legal authority or moral value.

Nor did Christ merely reject the traditions of his time; He set aside the traditional habits. He fermented men; stirred them to think for themselves; stimulated independent thinking. He spake with authority, not by substituting a new tradition for a rival one, but by so presenting truth that the minds and hearts of his hearers recognized it on his bare presentation of it. Often by a question He revealed to men a truth which they possessed and did not know that they possessed it. "Why do you call me good?" "Who do you say is neighbor?" "What do you think is the chief commandment?" "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" "Whom do ye say that I am?" He did not think for his congregation. I do not recall that He ever told them what they *must* think. But He habitually invited them to share his thinking with

Him. If a heretic is, what the dictionary tells us he is, a man who gives forth his own opinions when they are in conflict with the received opinions of his age, there never was such a heretic as Jesus Christ.

He was a social heretic as well. He set himself against the established order; was in the true sense of the term a revolutionary preacher. The established order was one of aristocracy in the State as well as of hierarchy in the Church. There were few rich and many poor; few wise and many ignorant. Christ paid no deference to wealth; very little to wisdom. For Himself and his immediate followers He did not desire wealth, and He scorned it in others unless they were using it in public service. The man who could see no use for his abundant harvest but to hoard it He called a fool;

and honest scorn is the hardest kind of rebuke to bear. He assailed scholars unless they were using their scholarship to enlighten others less wise than themselves. He was a great leveler—a leveler up, not down. He did not merely teach that rich men should contribute to the poor and wise men furnish instruction to the ignorant. He taught that the function of the rich is to serve the poor, of the strong to serve the weak, of the wise to serve the ignorant, until classes are abolished and society becomes one great brotherhood of man. And the established order was aroused against Him. His popularity added to his offense. First the leaders of his time despised Him; then they feared Him; and they ended by hating Him.

This hate was intensified by race prejudice. And to prejudice, whether

of class, religion, or race, Jesus showed no quarter. The Jewish religionists believed that they believed in a kingdom of God. But they did not. They believed in a kingdom of Israel. Of course they knew that a rebellion against Rome by the little province of Palestine would be hopeless unless they had powerful allies. They believed they had such an ally; they believed that "God was on their side." Doubtless there were teachers in Christ's time who gave a spiritual interpretation to the Old Testament prophecies. But the current opinion was that Jehovah had made a covenant with Israel and in fulfillment of that covenant would give her the rulership of the world and the heathen nations would serve under her yoke.

That notion, curiously revived in our time, Jesus repudiated. He told Nico-

demus, honored master in the Church, that he needed to be born again as much as if he had been a pagan; and He told the people that Zaccheus, the hated tax-gatherer, who had repented of his oppressions and declared his purpose to do all that he could to repair his injustice, was a child of Abraham. He told the Jews that He had never seen so much faith in all Israel as He saw in a Roman centurion, and He told a crowd of scornful scribes and Pharisees that drunkards and harlots would go into the kingdom of heaven before them. At the beginning of his ministry He told the congregation at Nazareth that the Jews were not God's favorites, and at the close of his ministry He told the Jewish leaders in the Temple at Jerusalem that God would take from them the kingdom and give it to an-

other people who would bring forth its fruits.

An angry mob drove Him from the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry; an angry mob wrested from reluctant Pilate the death sentence at the end.

The elements which thus gave power to the leaders in the tragedy of the crucifixion still exist in human society, and wherever they exist still interpose to his cause the same bitter hostility. Whenever scrupulous obedience to ceremonial regulations supplants the spirit of self-sacrifice in daily life, whenever ambition for acquisition supplants ambition for service, whenever fear of the crowd paralyzes the courage needed to control the crowd, there will be found a Caiaphas, a Judas, or a Pilate, or perhaps all three in unconscious co-

operation. As my father said, the opportunity to commit the crime they committed will never occur again; but the sins which incited to that crime—ambition, greed, and cowardice—still exist and are ever the same.

The Worldly-Minded Church Member

IN these brief sketches of "The Crucifiers" I have made free use of my "Jesus of Nazareth," published in 1882 but now out of print, and of a course of lectures on the life of Christ delivered in 1887 but never published in this country; like those publications, these sketches are based on the Four Gospels. As the authenticity of these narratives has been called in question, it is proper to advise the reader that I began the study of the Gospels over sixty years ago, that it has been continued with intermissions ever since, that in that study I have read, I hope with an open mind, the writings of rationalistic, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant scholars of various schools, and that the conclusion I early reached, confirmed by subsequent stud-

ies, is that the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are trustworthy historical documents; that all three are founded, as Luke says his is, on previous material; that they were not written with a theological or dogmatic purpose, and are marvelously free from personal and party prejudice; and that the Fourth Gospel was written either by John or by some of his disciples acting as his amanuenses or reporters, and gives us the fullest and best account of Christ's ministry in Judea. In this chapter on Judas it is necessary to rely somewhat upon surmise, since no one of the Evangelists has attempted any analysis of his enigmatical character.

Judas of Kerioth, a small village about thirty miles south of Jerusalem, was the only Judean among the twelve. Presumably he belonged by birth and

education to the priestly party, was often at the Temple, and was trained from his earliest youth in reverence for its sacrificial services, certainly shared in the universal expectations of a temporal Messiah and in the almost universal prejudice which looked with rancor upon the Gentile world. The brief glimpses we obtain of his life indicate that he was in temperament hard, sensuous, materialistic, and was possessed of the too common vice of the descendants of Jacob, avarice. He became the treasurer of the little company, and, according to John, was not always honest in the management of his trust.

So long as Christ preached only, "The kingdom of God is at hand," Judas followed him, undoubting. His faith that he would soon share in the glories of the expected kingdom was

the common faith of all. It is evident from various incidents that Peter expressed the feeling of the twelve by his naïve question: "We have forsaken all and followed thee; what therefore shall we have?" When Christ refused the proffered crown, Judas was perplexed; when He told the people that it was only by death He could enter into his kingdom, Judas showed signs of disappointment that did not escape the sensitive heart of John; when in distincter language Jesus prophesied his crucifixion, Judas, we may be sure, approved Peter's rebuke of the Master; when Jesus uttered his first Philippic against the Pharisees, Judas would be one of the first to instigate, if not himself to utter, the caution, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended?" Such teachings of Jesus as the parable of the rich fool, and that of Dives and Laza-

rus, and his rejection of the rich young ruler, Judas would have resented if he understood them.

His religious prejudices must also have been often shocked—by Christ's indifference to the Temple and its sacrificial system; by his disregard of the ceremonial regulations which orthodox Judaism had added to the simple moral code of primitive Judaism; by his repeated rebukes of the priestly party; and by his repeated condemnation of race prejudice in such teachings as the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

With the continuance of Christ's ministry the conflict in the soul of Judas became increasingly bitter. Jesus thronged with admirers, promising his disciples to sit on twelve thrones, riding in triumphal procession into Jerusalem, Judas was proud to follow; but

he had no use for a Messiah sitting at meat with the despised Zaccheus, exiled from Judea, mobbed from the synagogue, stoned from the Temple, foretelling his own cruel death and inviting his followers to share his cross with Him.

Christ's teaching on Tuesday in the Temple put an end to this conflict in the soul of Judas. In those teachings Jesus made it clear that the kingdom of God was not a Jewish kingdom; the vineyard was to be taken from Judah and given to heathen nations; her house was to be left to her desolate. In the revelations of that hour the dream of Judas vanished. He seemed to himself the victim of an unwarrantable delusion. He rehearsed in his mind the repeated promises of the Master, and forgot the warnings and interpretations which accompanied them.

He *was* the victim of an unwarrantable delusion, but it was that of his own selfish and sensuous imagination.

To abandon a failing cause, to return to Judaism because Christianity had nothing to offer to him, to return empty-handed and confessing failure, was more than the sensitive ambition of Judas could endure. But why return empty-handed? For over two years the Judaic party had sought in vain the charmed life of the Galilean rabbi. He that should destroy for Judaism this young Goliath who had defied it, would he not receive the hosannas of victory from priest and from people? Judas saw himself crowned by the party of his youth and the vote of the Chief Council. *This*, not the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, was the price his imagination offered him for the betrayal of his Lord. He forgot that al-

ways the reward of treachery is scorn—scorn heaviest from those who profit by it. So did Arnold forget. So does every traitor.

Gradually resentment developed into revenge. His dark thoughts, gradually as they had grown, carefully as they had been hidden under an almost impenetrable reserve, Jesus had divined. More than once he had told his disciples, "The Son of man shall be betrayed." The disciples on such occasions looked with wondering suspicion at each other; most of all perhaps at Judas, who was not a Galilean. If these occasions did not reveal Judas to the twelve, they revealed him to himself. Did the Master hope that such indication to Judas of the path he was traveling would cause him to turn back? It had a contrary effect. Judas writhed in angrier indignation, because

he understood the application and the justice of the warning.

Such was his state of mind when a very simple incident crystallized growing design into an instant and well-defined resolve. On the return of Jesus from the conflicts in the Temple to the home of Martha and Mary, they made an entertainment for Him; Judas of course was among the guests. The supper was Martha's homage to Jesus. After the supper Mary offered Him hers—a box of very valuable ointment. With it she anointed the head of Jesus, the remainder she poured on Jesus' feet. Judas forgot his careful reticence, and openly condemned the waste. He even succeeded in communicating his sentiments to some of the other disciples. Christ sharply rebuked the rebuker. "Let her alone," He said.

Then He added with infinite pathos, "She hath done this to my burial."

The rebuke thus administered to Judas was less severe than the one which Jesus had not long before administered to Peter. But impulsive love was the keynote to Peter's character; self-love was the master passion of the soul of Judas. Love accepts any rebuke; self-love submits to none. Judas escaped at the earliest moment from the room, sought some of the chief priests and communicated to them his readiness to betray his former Master. Even in the excitement of that hour he did not forget his ruling passion. The priests agreed to pay him thirty shekels for his service. The die was cast, and Judas only awaited the opportunity to fulfill his design.

I need not here retell the familiar story of the betrayal. The crime was

committed when a bargain was made, and here it is the crime of Judas which concerns us.

In the seventh chapter of Romans Paul has told the story of a similar conflict in his own soul between the flesh and the spirit. "I do not understand," he says, "why I act as I do. For what I would, that I do not; and what I hate, that I do." What reader of this article does not know that experience? Only a very perfect saint or a hopelessly hardened sinner can be wholly ignorant of it. Christ warned his disciples of the peril of such a divided life in the saying, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." But the persistent endeavor to do the impossible is not uncommon. Amiel pictures the spirit of allegiance to the world graphically. " 'All the world' is the greatest of powers; it is sovereign and calls itself *we*.

We dress, *we* dine, *we* walk, *we* go out, *we* come in, like this and not like that. This *we* is always right, whatever it does. . . . What *we* does or says is called custom, what it thinks is called opinion, what it believes to be beautiful or good is called fashion."

Whoever accepts *we* as his sovereign in business, in politics, and in society during the week and endeavors to appease his conscience by adoring Christ as his sovereign in church services on Sunday; whoever, professing to accept Christ's principles as his guide, compromises them in a vain endeavor to make them harmonize with the custom, the opinion, and the fashion of the time, has entered on the path which Judas trod to its tragic end. Paul found escape by his faith in a pardoning and life-giving God. Judas surrendered to his demon, and then

tried to flee from himself by endeavoring to flee from life. To what by his suicide did he flee? At death the impenetrable curtain falls. We do not know.

The Ambitious Ecclesiastic

AMBITION (that is, the love of power) is a less sordid vice than avarice (that is, the love of acquisition), but it is more subtle in its development and more perilous to others in its results. Avarice isolates its victim. Ambition is a group vice; for power can be obtained by one only as he shares its exercise with others. No autocrat can be the father of a million children. He cannot be omnipotent, because he cannot be omnipresent and omniscient. The Czar had his Bureau; the Pope has his Vatican; the American boss his machine. Avarice is lonely in the Church; ambition is not. Ambitious ecclesiastics have been almost as common in history as ambitious rulers.

Shameful degeneracy and disorder characterized in the first century of the

present era the miscalled Holy Land. The functions of the courts of Judea were usurped by their heathen conquerors. The Great Congregation, the House of Representatives of ancient Israel, had long since disappeared; such of the political and judicial functions once exercised by the Court of the Princes as were permitted to a conquered people by Rome were exercised by the Sanhedrim. The monarchy no longer existed. The high priesthood, an office partly religious, partly political, was filled by creatures of Rome, appointed and removed at the pleasure of the Roman governor. This office, originally held for life, was held during a hundred and seven years by twenty-seven appointees. With delicate sarcasm John describes Caiaphas as high priest for that year.

But for nearly fifty years this office

had been really under the control of Annas. He seems to have been one of that class of politicians who are willing that others should occupy the place of state provided that they themselves may really wield its powers. Five of his sons held in succession the no longer sacred office. It was held at this juncture by a son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas. Both father and son were creatures of the Roman Court; both belonged to the Sadducaic party and were openly infidel concerning some of the articles of the Hebrew faith regarded as fundamental truths by the Pharisees or Orthodox Jews. Both were professional politicians. The patriotism of these priests was that of the place-hunter. "If we let him alone," they said, "we shall lose both our place and our nation." In their view, it was far better that Jesus should

lose his life and the Judean courts their purity than that they should lose their offices.

To Annas, as the moving spirit of the priestly party, Jesus was first taken. Upon Annas, really more than upon Pilate, more than upon Caiaphas, who was simply the executioner of his father's will, the responsibility for the crucifixion rests. But Annas had no intention of bearing that responsibility. He sent the prisoner at once, bound as He was, to Caiaphas. A preliminary examination accompanied by acts of lawless violence took place while the Sanhedrim was assembling, but thrice had the cock from some distant garden been heard to crow before the court was convened and the formal trial begun.

The Jewish books contain an elaborate and, on the whole, a remarkably

merciful code. The court could not be convened by night; the accused could not be condemned on his own confession; two witnesses were necessary to secure sentence of death; these witnesses must be examined in the presence of the accused; he had the opportunity of cross-examination; a perjurer was liable to the penalty which would have been visited in case of conviction upon the prisoner; the latter had a right to be heard in his own defense; a verdict could not be rendered on the same day as the trial, nor on a feast day; the discovery of new evidence, even after the preparations for execution had commenced, entitled the condemned to a new hearing.

But it is a mistake to trace the actual history of the Jewish courts in the rules and precedents of their books. One might as well attempt to form a correct

conception of the trials under Lord Jeffreys from a study of the statutes of James II, or the actual procedures of a Roman court from a perusal of the Pandects of Justinian. It is the very curse of degenerate and disordered times that laws and precedents are set aside by passion and by partisan interest.

It was certainly so in the case of Jesus. The letter of the law forbidding trials by night seems to have been regarded, but its spirit was violated by a midnight examination and by a final trial in the first gray twilight of early dawn. A quorum of the court was present, but it was convened in haste so great and with notice so inadequate that at least one of the most influential friends of Jesus seems to have had no opportunity to participate in its deliberations. Witnesses were sum-

moned, and discrepancies in their testimony were noted; but the just and reasonable rule requiring the concurrent testimony of two was openly and almost contemptuously disregarded. An opportunity was formally offered Jesus to be heard in his own behalf, but no adequate time was afforded Him to secure witnesses or prepare for his defense, and the spirit of the court denied Him audience, though its formal rules permitted Him a hearing. Finally, all other means of securing his conviction having failed, in violation alike of law and justice, Jesus was put under oath and required, in defiance of his protest, to bear testimony against Himself. The law requiring a day's deliberation was openly set aside, and with haste as unseemly as it was illegal the prisoner was sentenced and executed within less than twelve hours

after his arrest—within less than six after the formal trial.

But vaulting ambition had overleaped itself. Caiaphas and his co-conspirators had not preserved their offices. In less than fifty years the Roman legions had destroyed Jerusalem, demolished the Temple, and, with the accompaniment of unbelievable cruelty, had scattered the people and destroyed the nation. As a nation its life has never been renewed.

There was but one possible escape from the tragedy which Jesus had foreseen more clearly than his enemies had foreseen it. That one escape Jesus had in vain pointed out to a people who would not see. If the Jewish nation would fulfill its divinely appointed mission, the people must abandon their superstitious notion that Israel was God's favorite, that He Who had deliv-

ered their fathers from the armies of Egypt and the rule of Pharaoh would deliver the sons from the armies of Rome and the rule of Caesar. They must adopt toward the Roman Government a policy of submission. Resistance was immoral: they had no right to accept the coin of Caesar in their markets and refuse the tribute which helped support his Government. Resistance was impossible; for what king with ten thousand could hope to meet in battle another king with twenty thousand? For this reason Jesus counseled his disciples to submit to the unjust exactions of the Roman military rule; for this reason He bid Peter put up his sword. Jesus was no Anarchist. Whether He would have led a revolution against the unjust government imposed upon his people if conditions had been such as to give any promise

of success we cannot tell. But He would not live under the protection of a government and at the same time repudiate its authority and resist the enforcement of its laws. This, not an indiscriminating policy of non-resistance, is the meaning of Christ's often misinterpreted and misapplied teaching.

There was one hope for Israel, and only one. They must abandon their traditional ambition for a political dominion *over* other world peoples and substitute ambition for a spiritual dominion *in* other world peoples. The kingdom of God would come without observation; it would grow up gradually and secretly, as a plant grows from seed sown in the ground. Israel might confer this kingdom on other peoples, but could not impose it on them. Jesus would have his disciples fulfill the

prophecies of the Old Testament by destroying the fear of a host of immoral gods and goddesses which ruled in the hearts of pagan peoples and implanting in its place a spirit of loyalty for one righteous God who demands righteousness of his children and demands nothing else; He would have them supplant a religion of priestly ceremonies in a temple by the religion of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God in daily life. And they could not overthrow paganism in Rome unless they first overthrew paganism in their own hearts. Such a spiritual revolution would have saved Israel, but it would have destroyed the power of the priestly party. That such a spiritual revolution in Israel, such a substitution of a national ideal of spiritual power in the hearts of men for the then popular ideal of political control of the conduct

and the fortunes of men, might have saved the nation the priests could not see, but they could see that it would destroy their prestige and their power, and they conspired to put Jesus to death that they might save themselves and their offices.

I leave this study of the character and policy of Annas and his son-in-law to the reflections of my readers with this brief paragraph of application taken from my father's "Corner Stone":

"The spirit of the high priests reigns still in the world—in many a heart which puts the splendor of forms, or the stability of an ecclesiastical organization, in place of the progress of pure heartfelt piety. Many a pastor would prefer having a man in *his* congregation rather than in another man's

church, and will really regret the progress of religion if he sees its current flowing out of his own communion. How many times have professed friends of God stopped suddenly the progress of his cause by contending about the division of the fruits of its success? They think they are punctilious for the order and regulation of the Church. So did Caiaphas. They sacrifice the interests of the soul for the sake of scrupulous adherence to what they deem the letter of the law. This was exactly the sin of the priests and the Pharisees. The law of God and attachment to his prescribed ordinances is their pretended motive, while love of personal influence or denominational ascendency is the real one. So it was with these crucifiers of the Saviour. There may be a great difference in the degree in which these feelings

are exhibited, but let those who cherish them study the case and see if they can find any difference in kind. We can find none. Whoever puts his rank and station, and the interests of that division of the Church to which he belongs, on which perhaps his rank and station depend, in competition with the progress of real, heartfelt, genuine piety in the world, will find, if he is honest, that the spirit of the Jewish Sanhedrim is precisely his."

The Cowardly Politician

THE kingdom of Herod, dependent on the power of the Roman Government, had fallen to pieces with the death of Herod, and the southern province had passed under the rule of Pilate, a Roman appointed by the Roman Emperor. The Temple at Jerusalem was built upon a broad platform of rock overlooking the deep ravine upon the east, and was separated by another deep ravine from the palace, once of Solomon, now of Herod, upon the west. Adjoining this Temple there had been built by Pilate what was at once a Roman garrison and a Roman Governor's palace. Its broad halls were almost as wide as the Jewish streets, and its abundant rooms furnished a resting-place for five hundred soldiers,

besides the rooms for the Roman Governor.

At about six o'clock in the morning of April 7, A.D. 34, Pilate, resting in his palace in this Tower of Antonia, was aroused by turbulent sounds in the street below. He was used to the turbulence of the Jewish people. Twice he had entered into conflict with the priesthood, stirring up the people, and had been compelled, by fear of violence, to withdraw humiliated and defeated from the controversy. He hastened down, stepped out onto the broad space that led directly into the Temple courts, and there saw a great multitude, growing into a mob. Before him stood a few of the priesthood, whom he hated, and in their midst a single figure, pale, wearied with the night's watching, with some of the signs of the ignominy and shame that

had already been heaped upon Him, his hands bound behind his back. But something in the soul that looked through his eyes made itself felt even in the heart of the unemotional Roman. He asked the priesthood what they wanted. "We ask," they said, "ratification of our sentence. We have found this fellow guilty, have condemned him to death, and we ask authority to execute the death sentence. If he were not guilty, we would not have condemned him." "I'm not so sure of that," said Pilate. "What has he done?"

The priests had prepared themselves for this possible exigency, and proceeded with their new accusation. "We have found this fellow," they said, "perverting the people. He has claimed to be a king and has set himself up against Caesar."

Pilate rightly assumed jurisdiction of the case, summoned Jesus within the fortress for a quieter examination, and asked Him for an explanation of these charges. Jesus would not defend Himself before a dishonest tribunal. But the Roman Governor, ignorant alike of the character and mission of Jesus, was really perplexed. It was his duty to prevent and punish sedition. And Jesus readily vouchsafed him the explanation he requested in a few brief but significant words, whose meaning a paraphrase may help to make clear.

He was a king, but He was no preacher of sedition. Who had brought this accusation against Him? The Jews. When was it ever known that the Jewish priesthood complained to their Gentile Government of one who sought the political emancipation of the nation? None knew better than

Pilate how restive were the people under the Roman yoke. The voices of the mob before the judgment seat crying out for Jesus' blood were unwitting witnesses of his innocence. He was a king, but his kingdom was not of this world. If it had been, then surely from among the hundreds who only four days before had accompanied Him to Jerusalem, hailing Him as their monarch, some would have been found ready to defend his person with their lives. Not to found a new dynasty nor to frame a new political organization had Christ come into the world, but to bear witness to the truth.

Pilate, half pityingly, half contemptuously, replied with his famous question, "What is truth?" To this Roman realist, knowing only kingdoms that are built by the sword and cemented by blood, this conception of an invisi-

ble kingdom of truth seemed but the baseless vision of a religious enthusiast. But, though he lacked moral, he did not lack political, penetration. It was clear that this Galilean rabbi was no rival to the Caesars. The suspicions which he had from the first entertained of the motives of his old-time enemies were confirmed, and from this brief interview he returned to the accusers of Jesus to announce his judgment of acquittal. Then commenced the battle which waged for certainly an hour or more.

Consider the three figures in this battle. First, the priesthood: resolute, earnest, determined, clamorous, inciting the gathering mob, in order that they might wrest from the unwilling judge the condemnation which they could not expect from his conscience or his reason. Second, the prisoner: no

pen can venture to picture Him—calm, unmoved, silent, interposing to the false accusations nothing but a solemn and witnessing silence. Third, Pilate: a Roman; who believed neither in God nor in immortality; whose moral sense had in it no religious inspiration; whose only support in an hour of trial was that sense of honor so much vaunted and so feeble; who would have resented with wrathful indignation the charge of cowardice, and yet who proved himself a coward in an hour that tried his courage. He endeavors by various devices to appeal to the sympathies of a mob that have no sympathies. One thing he does not do. He does not say to that gathering mob: "Though the heavens fall, justice shall be done. Though he that stands before me is but a weak enthusiast, without friends, though his execution can

do no harm and his deliverance may do much injury, still I will do justice, come what may." And when, at last, the priests cry out in feigned indignation, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend," and he foresees his own office taken from him by the most jealous of the Caesars, he yields to the mob and Christ is led away to be crucified.

"To do a great right do a little wrong." If there ever were a case in which this principle might be invoked to justify an act of injustice, Pilate might have invoked it. In order to save the life of one whom he regarded as a harmless enthusiast he would have had to hazard the lives of a score or more of Roman soldiers, imperil the peace and order of the entire community, and perhaps sacrifice his own office. Was

it worth so great a cost to do justice to a single man? Safety for himself, for the soldiers under his command, for the community which he was appointed to protect, all seemed to call for Pilate's judgment: "I do not condemn him; but take him and execute your own sentence upon him."

Are there no Pilates in America? no men who have no other standards of right and wrong than the consequences which they can forsee from a proposed course of action? no men who have been turned from the straight path by public clamor? no danger that we shall bow to the will of the crowd despite the protests of our conscience? no tendency to write across the sky, as though it were a divine law, Vox Populi; Vox Dei? Whoever in political life consents to be a partner in putting into effect the passions and

prejudices of the crowd, or by public act justifies their action which in his own conscience he condemns, or puts his own safety or the safety of others or the preservation of peace above doing justly, repeats the sin of Pilate. Nor is it only in political life that Pilate is seen. The broader lesson of this partner in the crime of the crucifixion my father has stated with characteristic plainness of speech:

"Very few men ever think of comparing themselves with Pontius Pilate, or with the soldiers who executed his orders, when perhaps there are not anywhere in the Bible delineations of character which might be more universally appropriated than these. Neither of them had any special hatred for the Saviour. Pilate would have done his duty if he could have done it by any common sacrifice; but, like mul-

titudes, probably, who will read this examination of his character, he was not willing to make the sacrifice that was necessary in taking the right side. The reader fluctuates, perhaps, just as he did, between conscience and temptation, yielding more and more to sin, and finding the struggle more hopeless the longer it is continued. A religious book, an afflictive or a warning providence, or an hour of solitude, quickens conscience and renews combat; but the world comes in with its clamors, and after a feeble resistance, he gives way again—Pilate exactly, in everything but the mere form in which the question of duty comes before him."

The Callous Profiteers

OF all the cruel punishments of a barbaric age, crucifixion was the most barbarous. It possessed a bad pre-eminence of cruelty in an age when fashionable audiences crowded the vast amphitheater to applaud the fearful horror of gladiatorial combats and fair women gave the death signal and feasted their sanguinary eyes on the ebbing life of the defeated. It was in this age that Cicero called crucifixion a punishment most inhuman and shocking, and wrote of it that it should be removed from the eyes and ears and the very thought of men. Too horrible for a Roman citizen, no freeman might be subjected to it. It was reserved, with rare exceptions, for slaves and foreigners.

Upon this Gentile cruelty the Jew

looked with special horror. The cross, like the eagle, was the sign of national degradation. Its infliction by the Romans was a badge of Israel's servitude. The ancient law of Moses affixed a peculiar curse to it. To crucify even a corpse was to submit it to the greatest possible indignity. Thus the agony of pain was intensified by the agony of its peculiar shame.

The physical anguish of the cross was that of a lingering death. The victim's life was wrested from him in a fierce but predetermined battle, that lasted always many hours, often several days. Every moment of this hopeless contest added new agony to an anguish at first almost unendurable. Yet no vital organ was directly touched, and the stubborn life surrendered to his invincible foe only after a long and protracted siege. Even the

pitiless, stolid Roman endured not long the sight of sufferings at once so protracted and so intense. Rarely was the criminal suffered to die by the mere infliction of the cross. A thrust with the spear or a blow with the club at length put an end to tortures which wearied even the patience of spectators.

Jesus endured the consuming tortures of the cross for nearly six hours; then nature gave way. Exhausted by the week of conflict in the Temple, by the draft upon his sympathies in the growing perplexity of his disciples, by his foresight of their shattered hopes and their impending grief, by his futile efforts to save Judas Iscariot, by his farewell supper and his night of watching, by his anguished prayer that He might not misunderstand and so fail to fulfill his Father's will, by his trial experiences in the Jewish court and the

malignant clamor of the mob in Pilate's court, by the cruel scourging and the march to death, and by the nearly six hours of indescribable suffering on the cross, He bowed his head and yielded up his spirit to his Father, dying literally broken-hearted.

Is there in literature or in history any drama in which are portrayed so simply and on so small a stage the conflicting passions of man?

The priests exulting in the sufferings of their victim and chanting their devil's anthem: "He trusted in God that he would deliver him. Let him deliver him if he will have him. King of Israel? Let him come down from the cross that we may believe in him."

The women lamenting for Him. In the funeral march they had followed the condemned, beating upon their breasts and filling the air with their

outcries. Arrived at the mount of crucifixion, they had offered him a drink of sour wine mingled with myrrh, an anodyne which, dulling the sense, might render the anguish of the cross more endurable.

The penitent brigand, crucified at his side, dimly perceiving the conquering spirit of the dying Christ and moved thereby to a late repentance.

The broken-hearted mother, scarce able to endure the sight of her dying son, yet, mother-like, unable to withdraw from it.

The one faithful friend, faithful even unto death, when all else had fled; his hopes shattered, his faith confused and perplexed, and yet his love unchanged, to whom with his parting breath Christ intrusted the care of his bereft mother. Well was he called the beloved disciple.

Last and strangest of all, the four

soldiers who in the midst of this scene of tumultuous experience of human emotion—gratified hate, tearful pity, awakened penitence, broken-hearted love—could see nothing but an unaccustomed chance for booty. Ancestors of professional gamblers of all classes and in all epochs, Henry Ward Beecher well described them in his "Lectures to Young Men" delivered in Indianapolis in 1844: "How marked in every age is a gambler's character! The enraged priesthood of ferocious sects taunted Christ's dying agonies; the bewildered multitude could shout; but no earthly creature but a gambler could be so lost to *all* feeling as to sit down coolly under a dying man to wrangle for his garments and arbitrate their avaricious differences by casting dice for his tunic, with hands spotted with his spattered blood, warm and yet undried upon

them. The descendants of these patriarchs of gambling, however, have taught us that there is nothing possible to hell, uncongenial to these, its elect saints."

The war profiteers of our time are the spiritual descendants of these pagan soldiers.

In the stress of war mothers give their sons, wives their husbands, men themselves. The whole nation pours out its money in a passion of generosity. Never before in the world's history was there seen such flaming indignation, such weeping pity, such generous giving on so large a scale.

Then the profiteer appears. He hears no call to self-sacrifice and service; he sees only a chance for gain. He takes it. He coins the tears of mothers and the blood of their sons into gold. He is the vulture of the bat-

tlefield. He succeeds; he makes a fortune; but his fortune is blood money. The house he builds, the automobile in which he rides, the jewels with which he decks his wife and daughters, are the medals of his dishonor.

Is he as callous as he appears? Or does his conscience sometimes say to him, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"?

The First Pagan Convert

PAGAN religions have worshiped men whom they made gods; the Christian religion worships a God who has made Himself a man. And we can understand the divine nature which He has come to interpret only as we understand the human experience through which He imparts it.

Great men rarely comprehend their mission. Did Luther comprehend to what the Protestant world would grow? Did John Wesley comprehend to what Methodism would grow? We do not know when Jesus comprehended the mission with which He was charged. That He grew up sharing the belief of his countrymen that Israel was God's favored people and that the kingdom of God would be the kingdom of Israel is highly probable. That He

had become convinced before entering on his public ministry that God is the Father of the whole human race and that the kingdom of God is not provincial but world-wide is evident from his first sermon preached in the village synagogue at Nazareth. To convert the people to this larger faith was a chief object of his ministry.

And He had failed. When He first announced this faith, the congregation mobbed Him. When later He told the people that they must imbibe his spirit and share in his self-sacrifice, they abandoned Him in such numbers that He turned sadly to his chosen companions with the question, Will ye also go away? When He went up to Jerusalem for his final battle with the priests and Pharisees, his steadfastness written in his face, his companions followed, sadly perplexed between their

hopes and their fears. But they still thought that the kingdom would immediately appear. Peter wanted to know what recompense they would receive for their loyalty. James and John came asking the first places in the coming kingdom. It is no easy task to disabuse a mind of inherited prejudice. When Jesus talked in parables, they interpreted Him literally; when He talked plainly, they thought He was talking in parables. And at times they discussed among themselves his teaching and confessed, "We cannot tell what he saith." The last week of conflict in the Temple made his meaning clear to the ecclesiastics, but not to the twelve. Hate comprehended, love did not. His disciples could not understand his prophecies because they would not believe in the impending disaster.

May I use common words in attempting to portray an uncommon experience? Then I will say that love was the controlling genius of Christ. Nowhere does that genius find expression in more varied experiences than in the twenty-four hours before his death.

In the last meeting with his friends not once does Christ ask for comfort or strength from them. Only once does He indicate the sorrow that oppresses Him, and then only that He may also indicate the strength which supports Him: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Not to receive comfort but to give it has He sought this hour. The theme of his "table talk" is given in the opening sentence: "Let not your heart be troubled."

After the supper Christ goes out with his disciples to what was probably a familiar trysting-place, since Judas goes straight thither to find Him. He has taken every precaution against surprise by asking his three friends to watch; and they have not watched, but slept. Christ hurries out—to save Himself? No! To save them; to give them the hint to flee; and then Himself to surrender. But this He does not do until He has made one more effort to save Judas; "Friend, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

In the preliminary examination Christ can hear through the open door the audacious but now thoroughly frightened Peter cursing and swearing, "I know not this man." A look from the Master suffices; for love sometimes speaks more eloquently through the eye than through the tongue, and

Peter, recalled by that look, "went out and wept bitterly."

Roman law forbade public lamentation for a criminal. But it is not in the power of law to restrain the sympathies of women. The tears of certain daughters of Jerusalem, who after Christ's condemnation followed Him to the place of his execution, touched his heart. He forgot his own sufferings in his forecast of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. "Weep," said He, "not for me; weep for yourselves and your children."

Arrived at the place of execution and nailed to the cross, He thought not of Himself but of his executioners: "Father," He cried, "forgive them; for they know not what they do."

To the taunts of the priests, joined in by one of the brigands crucified at his side, He made no response. But to the

other brigand, who dimly felt the more than royal dignity of the King at his side, He breathed a promise of forgiveness and a future life. "To-day," said He, "shalt thou be with me in paradise."

At the foot of the cross were two who loved Him. Their reverence touched that heart which no suffering of his own and no injustice to Himself could move to speech. In the broken accents of a parting breath, He gave to them the last message of his love: "Mother—look—thy son; son—look —thy mother."

A preternatural darkness, a heavy atmosphere, an awe-inspiring gloom, a singular feeling of helpless insecurity, foretold the impending earthquake. And then the last cry from the cross interpreted for all followers of Christ

the meaning of death: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And "when the centurion saw that He cried out and gave up the ghost he said, 'Truly this man was God's son.' "

Strange that the first clear recognition of the divineness of Christ's character should come from a Roman pagan; stranger still that he should be convinced, not by any miracle which Jesus wrought, not by any doctrine which Jesus taught, but by his death. The hour of Christ's failure was the hour of his success. Love came to earth to save men from themselves. Greed, ambition, cowardice, callous indifference, and enthusiastic hate conspired to destroy love. And in their exultant victory love triumphed.

The Jewish conception of a kingdom of God won by triumphant power has

continued in the Christian Church to this day. Still there are men who look for a Christ to come in the clouds and his angels with Him to convert the world. Still there are men who think that the kingdom of God, when it comes, will come with observation. Still Christ says to them, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

Christ has received his crown—it is one of thorns. He has received his scepter—the mocking soldiers put it in his hands. He has ascended his throne —the cross is his throne. For thorns and mockery and death willingly borne for the sake of others is love's coronation. Power might win the reluctant submission of men through fear; but only self-sacrificing love can inspire love. We have not to wait for heaven to see the glory of God. The song which John heard in heaven was that of

a great chorus seeing upon the earth the glory of God: "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The Roman centurion, won by Christ's death to an understanding of Christ's life, was an unconscious prophet of this throng. Said a Bulu to Miss McKenzie, "I was like a child crying in the dark for fear, until the day when I knew Jesus. Then it was as if my mother put her hand on me."

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